

SAMPLE BECOMING CATHOLIC EUCHARIST

A practical guide
for families

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SAMPLE



INTRODUCTION

THE FAMILY IS THE MOST BASIC FORM OF HUMAN COMMUNITY. FOR THE CATHOLIC FAMILY, IT IS OUR FAITH IN A LOVING GOD, AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS GOD, THAT PROVIDE US WITH A GUIDE FOR LIVING IN PEACE, HARMONY AND MUTUAL RESPECT.

This book aims to support you in the religious development of your children, particularly as they prepare to celebrate the sacraments: in this case, First Communion, or the Eucharist.

Back in the mid-sixties, the Catholic Church underwent a period of renewal in an effort to recapture the spirit and mission of Jesus as one who came to share God's dream for the world. This important gathering of the Pope with all the bishops of the world is known as the Second Vatican Council. The work of the Council was to look again at the life of the Church and to renew the rituals and practices of the Church so as to make them more relevant to people of the modern world.

This process ushered in many changes, such as allowing the Mass to be celebrated in the language of the people in each country. The sacraments underwent changes too, so that the meaning and symbols used in the various celebrations would be more easily understood.

Among the key insights coming out of this

Council were statements that affirmed you, as parents, as the first educators of your children in faith, and the family unit as the 'domestic church'. At the present time, as a Church, we continue to hold firm to these values and to seek ways of promoting and supporting family life almost as a mini-church community.

This program strengthens your role as parents.

For some of you, this involvement in preparing your child to celebrate the sacraments may seem a daunting task, and yet you are the ones who loved your children into life, who teach them right from wrong, and who show them ways of being thankful and making peace within the family. You are the ones, often encouraged through the wishes and desires of your own parents, who brought your children to church to begin the process of initiation into the Catholic community through the sacrament of Baptism. You are the ones, with the support of godparents, who share Christian values with your children and who lead by example in belonging to—and being involved in—the life of the local Christian community.

This is the way we are invited to understand the importance of your role. As parents, you want what is

best for your children, and you know your children; at the heart of the matter is this deep and wonderful parent/child relationship and the experiences of life that are shared in the context of the family home. There are all kinds of expressions of family life and people who we name as family. It is this rich context of people living and sharing their lives together that forms the backdrop for more formal faith education, leading to the celebration of the sacraments and a growing involvement in the Catholic community.

As Christians, we take inspiration from the Scriptures and our belief is that God continues to be revealed to us in our daily lives through our reflections on the life of Jesus and the God Jesus showed to us. The stories

of Jesus in the Gospels tell us a lot about Jesus' relationship with God: it is that of a child to a loving parent. Throughout these pages, you will find some of the stories from the Gospels and they are offered as a way for you, as a family, to get in touch with the person, Jesus. He was born into and grew up in a loving family and friendship circle. He showed us what it was like to be in relationship with a loving God who continues to care deeply for each human being.

These stories and reflections are useful for helping each one of us develop a personal relationship with God's Son Jesus, and grow in our understanding of how Jesus developed—physically, emotionally



THE STORIES OF JESUS IN THE GOSPELS TELL US A LOT ABOUT JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD: IT IS THAT OF A CHILD TO A LOVING PARENT.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

TAKE A LITTLE TIME EACH DAY TO GATHER WITH THE FAMILY TO PRAY TOGETHER AND TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE STORY OF JESUS AND HIS FAMILY.



and spiritually—within his home environment, and with the support and example of his parents.

At the end of each theme, there are some suggestions for a Family Prayer Time. You might find them useful as a way of gathering the family together during this important time of preparation for your child's First Communion. Take a little time each day to gather with the family to pray together and to share your thoughts about the story of Jesus and his family. There are many similarities between what you are doing with

your children and how Joseph and Mary brought Jesus up and took him along to the temple for prayer times and religious festivals. What you as parents are entering into with your child is this same process of initiating your child more deeply into the religious life of the community: a journey begun with Baptism. This process of initiation into the Catholic community began with Baptism, was confirmed with Confirmation and will be completed when your child receives Holy Communion at the Sunday Eucharist for the first time.

For each theme in the book, there is a brief reflection at the beginning. This sets the scene and provides you with some insights into the life of Jesus with his parents, Mary and Joseph. Just as we can find our families sometimes challenging, sometimes joyful and fun-loving, other times just plain over-worked and busy, so too Jesus' family at Nazareth probably had to work together to find ways of creating a balance between work and play, time with friends and family, and time for God.

Sharing the Christian Story

In each theme, the reflection material is centred on a story from the Bible, and the reference for the story is included. You may like to read the whole story from the Bible when you gather together; or simply to focus on the caption from the story that accompanies the illustration.

Family Reflection Time

This section provides you with some ways of reflecting on the topic and making some connections

with the family life you share with your children.

Prayer Time

As you support your children in their faith journey as members of the Catholic community, it is important to spend a few moments together in prayer. This will help your child to understand the importance of prayer and to develop a personal relationship with Jesus.

Let us Pray

When you come together to share some time in prayer, it is often useful to have a special focus around which you gather. This might simply be at the dinner table or in a comfortable space in your living room. It is often useful to light a candle as a reminder of the presence of Jesus with you and your family, and also a Bible as a symbol of listening to the Word of God in the Scriptures.

Activity Sheets

For each topic, there are two activity sheets provided for you and your family. The second of these is a reflective, journaling activity.

YOU MAY LIKE TO READ THE WHOLE STORY FROM THE BIBLE WHEN YOU GATHER TOGETHER, OR SIMPLY TO FOCUS ON THE CAPTION FROM THE STORY THAT ACCOMPANIES THE IMAGE.

SYMBOLS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

Overview of Themes

PREPARING

- The Family at Nazareth
- Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the Temple
- Jesus with family and friends
- Jesus with Martha, Mary and Lazarus at Bethany.

CELEBRATING

- Jesus invited people to come to him
- The Last Supper
- Jesus continues to be present

LIVING

- The Catholic Community
- The shape of the Eucharist (Mass)
- Called to share Jesus' mission to the world.

As you continue this wonderful journey with your children, my hope is that you will be affirmed in your role as parents and in your understanding of the importance of family life. Just as Joseph and Mary belonged to a religious community and drew strength from their faith and celebrating with the community, I pray that you will also continue to share your faith with your children as they grow—in age, in grace and in wisdom—as members of the Catholic community.

When Catholics gather together in small groups for prayer, or as part of a large congregation on a Sunday, there are some symbols that are used that have special meaning.

The cross

Jesus died on a cross. This cross is also referred to as the tree of life because, although Jesus died on it, he also rose from it to new life. Christians bless themselves with the sign of the cross and they say these words: 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' These words are often used to begin times of prayer, and were first used at our Baptism.

Candles

We use candles as symbols of Christ's presence among us as 'the light of the world.' Whenever Christians gather to pray, the lighting of candles is a simple way of acknowledging the presence of Christ amongst us.

Water

This is a symbol of life. When people are baptised into the Catholic community, water is poured over the head of the person and the words prayed by the priest are, 'I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' When this happens at Baptism, it is a symbol of the new life a person is entering into as a Christian. As people go into the church, you will often see them place their hand in a font of water and then bless themselves with the sign of the cross. This reminds us of our Baptism.

SHARE YOUR FAITH WITH YOUR CHILDREN AS THEY GROW IN AGE, IN GRACE AND IN WISDOM AS MEMBERS OF THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY.

